Beautiful North Wales

"By mountain, meadow, streamlet, grove or dell,
Where health and peace, and contemplation dwell."—*Smollett.*

By Ashley P. Abraham.

C. L. Richards.

"A Rift in the Clouds"—Tryfaen and Llyn Ogwen

Beautiful North Wales

By ASHLEY P. ABRAHAM

(Author of "Rock-Climbing in North Wales," "Beautiful Lakeland," "The Lake Poets," etc.)

If thou art worn and hard beset
With sorrows, that thou would'st forget;
If thou would'st read a lesson, that will keep
Thy heart from fainting and thy soul from sleep;
Go to the woods and hills!—No tears
Dim the sweet look that Nature wears.

—*Longfellow.*

With 32 Monogravure Illustrations (copyright)

By G. P. ABRAHAM, F.R.P.S., Keswick.

PUBLISHED BY
G. P. ABRAHAM, KESWICK.
1914.

Contents

			PAGE
CHAPTER	I.	A Day's Round from Llandudno Via Conway, Carnarvon, Llanberis Pass and Bettws-y-coed.	5
,,	II.	From Bangor through Nant Ffrancon Pass to Capel Curig	14
,,	III.	From Llangollen to Dolgelley Via Corwen and Bala.	20
,,	IV.	Between the Mountains and the Sea From Dolgelley to Beddgelert.	30
,,	V.	The Heart of Wales From Beddgelert to Bettws-y-coed.	38
,,	VI.	Strolls around Bettws-y-coed and Climbs on Snowdon	45

List of Illustrations

The Pass of Aberglaslyn—*(Cover)*
"A Rift in the Clouds"—Tryfaen and Llyn Ogwen—*(Frontispiece)*
Sunshine and Shadow in Llanberis Pass
Conway Castle—"An Autumn Morning"
Carnarvon Castle—Eagle Tower
Llyn Llydaw and Snowdon
Moel Siabod from the River Llugwy
The Falls of the Swallow, Bettws-y-coed
Nant Ffrancon from the Glyders
"A Cloudy Afternoon"—Llyn Idwal
Looking down the Devil's Kitchen
A Mountain Shepherd
Capel Curig and Snowdon
The Dee and Llangollen Bridge
Valle Crucis Abbey
The Old Bridge at Llanuwchllyn
Tal-y-Llyn
Cader Idris from near Torrent Walk
The Precipice Walk, Dolgelley
Torrent Fall, near Dolgelley
Rhaiadr Du, near Dolgelley
Old Barmouth
Harlech Castle
Beddgelert and Snowdon
Llyn Dinas and Moel Hebog
Llyn Gwynant and Yr Aran
Miners' Bridge and River Llugwy
Bettws-y-coed and the Mountains
The Fairy Glen, near Bettws-y-coed
Lledr Vale and Moel Siabod
The Crazy Pinnacle of Crib Goch
Crib Goch and Snowdon

Beautiful North Wales.

CHAPTER I.

A Day's Round from Llandudno, *via* Bangor, Carnarvon, Llanberis Pass and Bettws-y-coed.

IN an ordinary way seaside resorts can lay but little claim to natural beauty, and they would thus appear to lie beyond the scope of this book. Llandudno, however, is in this respect a place apart. Granted that it possesses all the "pomp of pier and promenade," a "happy valley" and glorious stretches of sand, it nevertheless adds to these the Great and Little Ormes with their limestone cliffs, wild headlands, and pretty, exalted retreats.

Moreover, nowadays, the motor car has brought it into such close proximity with Snowdonia that its visitors can spend many days of their holidays amongst the remotest mountain fastnesses and yet return to their rooms by nightfall. It can almost be described as a centre for Snowdonia. The finest day's tour from Llandudno, that outlined at the head of this chapter, embraces a perfect galaxy of good things—historical mediæval castles, rocky headlands plunging to the Atlantic, a wild mountain pass "where untamed nature holds her savage sway," the highest mountains south of the Tweed, and lakes, rustic villages and waterfalls galore. Wherefore let us board our motor, public or private, and away to the hills!

Conway.

The road to Conway calls for no comment until we come in sight of its fine Edwardian Castle, seen across the water, with the rugged heights of Penmaenbach rising beyond. We must cross Telford's suspension bridge and enjoy the view seaward down the Conway estuary ere we pass under a turreted gateway and enter the old Anglo-Norman town. Its streets, narrow and tortuous, still retain a few ancient houses, but for the most part they are fairly modern. Welsh slates and stones are very deceptive and look old long before their time. The ivy-clad towers of the Castle and the complete girdle of walls around the town, second to none in Britain, are the distinctive features of the place, but Plas Mawr, the Tudor house with feudal gateways and crow-stepped gables, now the home of the Royal Cambrian Academy, must not be forgotten.

But the Castle is the "lion" of Conway, of course. Built by Edward I. in 1284, it has witnessed many a fierce siege, and, curiously enough, that King himself was amongst the first to put its strength to the test. He foolishly visited it with only a handful of men, when the Welshmen descended from the mountains and gave them a very lively time indeed until help arrived. Richard II. also stayed here for a while; the castle played a part in the Civil War, but it was surrendered to the Parliamentary forces and, twenty years later, dismantled by the Earl of Conway.

One of the sweetest of Wordsworth's poems refers to Conway,

> "And where are they? I pray you tell,"
> She answered, "Seven are we;
> And two of us at Conway dwell
> And two are gone to sea."

"*We are Seven*," was written in the Wye Valley, however, in spite of the assertions of some of the local guides who point out the "churchyard cottage" and the graves in the local God's Acre.

Sunshine and Shadow in Llanberis Pass

The ridge of Snowdon trends upward on the left skyline, with the Glyders to the right and Llyn Peris peeping round the corner below

Conway Castle—"An Autumn Morning"

The town of Conway is to the right, with Penmaenbach behind

Llanfairfechan and Aber.

Down the hill through the town we go and, soon after we draw clear of the houses, the great rocky bluff of Penmaenmawr looms ahead. Old travellers had a choice of two alternatives here—a road high up on the face of the cliff, entirely unprotected on its seaward edge, and the other a passage across the sands with the risk of being caught by the tide. The place terrorised travellers in those days, but to-day there is a fine road with a comforting wall alongside, and Penmaenmawr, alas! is now being terrorised by the traveller. For high up, where ugly scars and trails of *débris* desecrate it, road metal in vast quantities is being quarried. The "doomed mountain," as it is called, is experiencing a terrible retribution, for even the old British camp that encircles its summit is being sacrificed to the traveller's weal—or, rather, wheel.

After passing through the town the present road around the headland takes us up a considerable height and affords a fine sweep out to the Atlantic between Great Orme's Head and the map-like promontory of Anglesey, with Puffin Island just off it. We then drop down through Llanfairfechan, one of the pleasantest minor Welsh seaside resorts, to Aber, to which belongs a magnificent waterfall, too far off the road for us to-day, but well worth a future visit.

Near the centre of the village is a large artificial mound, called the Mwd, once the site of a castle built by Prince Llewelyn. Hither it was that he brought his wife, and later, amongst some prisoners, one William de Broes. The lady fell desperately in love with William, whereupon Llewelyn took his life. A certain cynical bard met the Princess before she had heard of her lover's fate and asked her,

"What will you give to see your Gwilym?"

Whereupon she answered,—

"Wales and England *and* Llewelyn
I'd freely give to see my Gwilym."

The bard then heartlessly led her to the tree from which hung her murdered lover's body.

People enjoy longer lives here nowadays, and the story of poor old Owen Davies and his aged spouse will be recalled; how they buried their youngest son, Evan, at the tender age of seventy-two, and how old Owen was heard to comfort his wife by saying—"But there, Myfanwy bach, poor Evan was never strong and I always said we would never bring him up, whateffer!"

Motoring is not the best means of seeing many parts of North Wales. The choicest bits must be traversed on foot to be properly appreciated, but now we hurry across the strath-like country without regret, for the mountains have receded far inland and the view across Lavan Sands to Beaumaris remains very much the same for mile after mile, until Penrhyn Castle is seen on our right and we drop down into Bangor. To the passer-by the old cathedral town is of no especial interest; we shall be well advised to motor straight through and put in our spare time amongst the hills, or at Carnarvon.

After leaving the town, pretty views across meadowland levels to Menai Straits disclose themselves, and for awhile Telford's graceful suspension bridge across to Anglesey, carrying his wonderful road from London to Holyhead, can be seen on our right. Its builder fondly imagined that it would be the bridge for all time—the last word in bridges—but with the advent of railways it soon proved quite inadequate, and a mile further westward we pass Stevenson's Tubular Bridge, over which thunders the Irish Mail to Holyhead. The Menai shore of Anglesey is beautifully wooded; ornate residences peep through the trees; an air of peace and prosperity pervades the countryside: Plas Newydd, the stately home of the Marquis of Anglesey, flashes across our vision ere the Straits are lost to sight behind the woods of Vaynol Park, and we then turn our attention inland to the distant peaks of Snowdonia, until the bustling little fort of Dinorwic is reached. Thence a few miles onward bring us to Carnarvon, the great

Carnarvon Castle—Eagle Tower

Snowdon and Llyn Llydaw

Carnarvon Castle.

Western guardian of Menai Straits—the "Fort over against Mona," or Anglesey. As at Conway, the Castle is the outstanding feature. And what a grim fortress it is! Massive and beautiful to look upon, the residence of Kings in bygone days, it now towers above the peaceful shipping at its base, an emblem of the stormy days when the Welsh and English were ever at each other's throats—"the most magnificent badge of the Welshmen's subjection." For situation it cannot compare with Harlech or Conway, but in its vast proportions, the beauty of its architecture, the massive ramparts of its octagonal limestone towers, with miniature towers rising above, it is, with the possible exception of Alnwick, the finest castle in Great Britain. Edward I. began it in 1283, but it was not finished until 1322. The castle was twice besieged by the Welsh hero, Owen Glyndwr, in his fight for freedom, but without success. It played much the same part as Conway Castle during the Civil War and was taken by the Parliamentary forces, but the warrant for its demolition was never given effect; hence its excellent state of preservation. In spite of this, however, it is but an empty shell,

> "Relic of Kings! Wreck of forgotten wars,
> To winds abandoned and the prying stars."

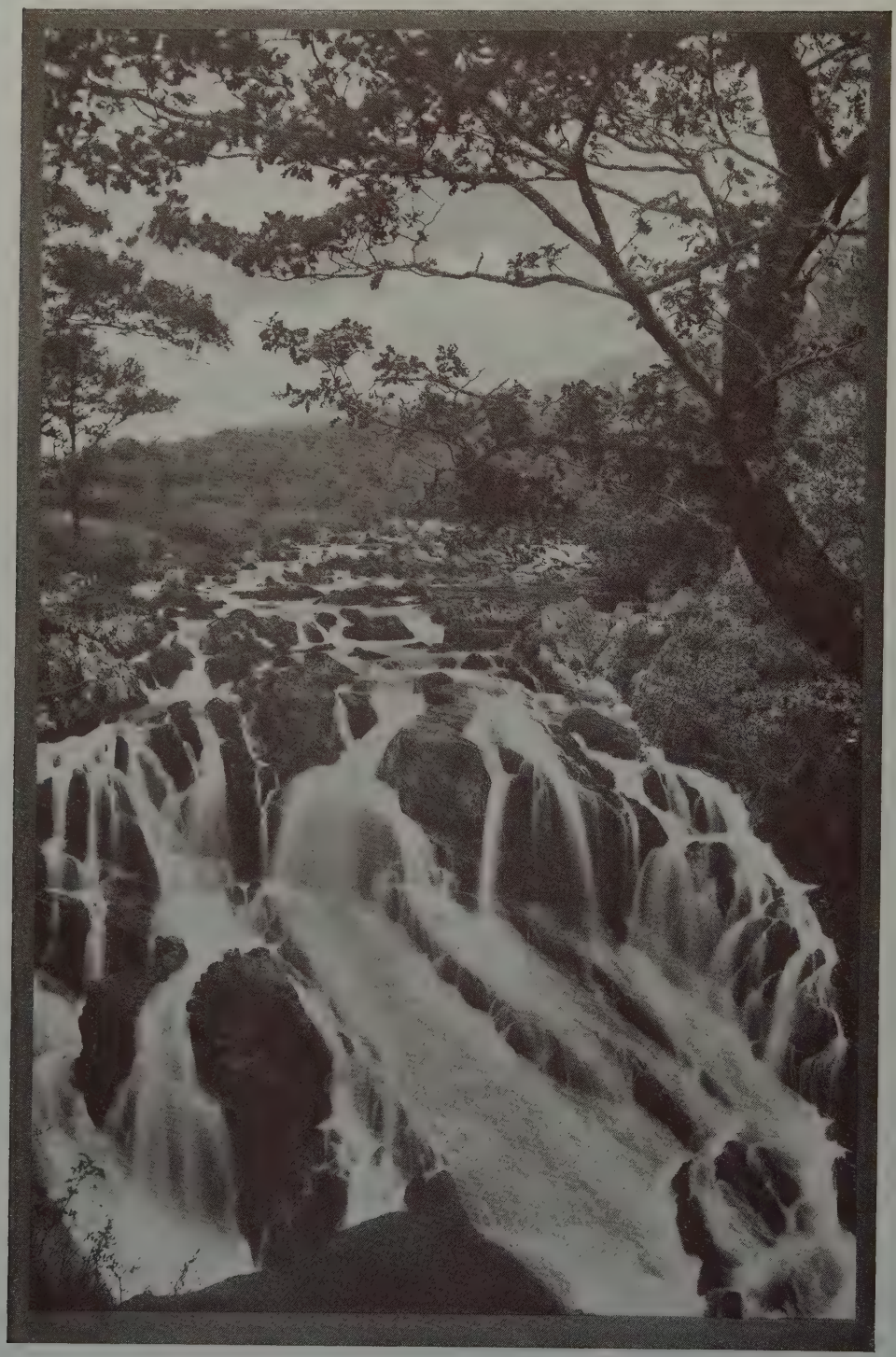
Gone are its hall and chapel and other evidences of interior pomp and grandeur; in fact, apart from the gateway, with its defaced statue of King Edward I. and the portcullis grooves, there is but little to be seen inside, except the view from Eagle Tower, which is outside, of course! And if one has an unsteady head even this will be missed. Better is it to make for the small eminence north of the city, Twt Hill, for the view thence is very fine. From Penmaenmawr in the north-east to the Snowdon group, and thence further round westward to the Lleyn Promontory and the graceful peaks of the Rivals, with Carnarvon and its turreted stronghold, backed by Menai Straits and Anglesey, the panorama is complete.

Llanberis.

But Snowdonia calls and we must away. Llanberis is our next *objectif*. The intervening nine miles take us through a country beautiful with glen and mountain. Rich pastures, oak-clad knolls and park-like lowland fill the foreground, but beyond rise green billowy hummocks and the foothills of Snowdonia, whilst above these towers the "Queen of Welsh mountains." Across the Seiont we speed, through Llanrug, ever nearing Llanberis, our hopes centred on its lakes.

Soon we are in sight of Llyn Padarn, but the disillusionment is too sad. For what do we see? Quarries, industry and traffic everywhere! The "sleep that is among the lonely hills" has been shattered by the shriek of syrens, the rumbling of trains and the booming of vast charges of gunpowder. Great scars mark the mountain sides, and the treeless shores of Padarn are doleful indeed. Thank goodness! we are in a motor and can hurry onward. Llanberis town possesses no interest; even the little engine and its carriages starting for distant Snowdon summit fail to charm, and we speed through, hoping that Llyn Peris may bring some comfort in the way of natural beauty. But disappointment is again ours, for across the lake the once beautiful flank of Elidyr Fawr is a gaping wound, terrace above terrace of quarries rising for hundreds of feet from the water's edge, the shouting of men, the rattle of machinery and the reverberating boom of blasting—uproar and mutilation everywhere.

From an industrial or economic point of view this is undoubtedly a cheery sight, and nobody grudges the hard-working men their livelihood, but it is not for this that we have come to Wales. Open up the throttle and let us be done with it! Speed along the roadway past the old tower of Dolbadarn Castle, now so incongruous and out of place, and let us up into the sanctuaries and quiet places of the hills! Ah, this is better. A sharp corner has taken us out of sight and sound of the quarries, and we are breasting Llanberis Pass, Snowdon and its



The Falls of the Swallow

Near Bettws-y-coed

sheltered cwms on one side and the unspoilt stony slopes of Esgair Felen, a spur of Glyder Fawr, on the other, whilst far ahead is our white roadway winding up to a gap on the skyline, and not another sign of human agency anywhere. A grand pass, indeed; a scene of silent wilderness to be remembered in days to come, when time and inexorable circumstances have driven us down again into the humdrum duties of everyday life.

Old writers who traversed Llanberis valley described it as "horrible" and "awful" and took their surgeon along with them in order that they might "lose a little blood" when "the terror became too overwhelming!" To us to-day it is inconceivable that these people were really afraid, but so little were these places visited by tourists a couple of centuries ago that imagination was given full rein, and no doubt these old travellers had many a sly laugh at their readers' expense. Wherein they had the advantage of present-day scribes!

> "Snowdon and Cader and Lliwedd and Glyder,
> What, after all, are formations like these?
> Stratified rock (when you come to consider)
> Placed at an angle of varying degrees."

Thus the present-day scientist, but all who visit them know that even to-day the mountains are vastly more than this, that their mystery is not quite dissipated, and that they touch an unsuspected chord in us and uplift our thoughts in a way that nothing else in nature can. The grey hollow above us on the right, with its protruding rounded slabs, polished and scratched by long-vanished glaciers, is Cwm Glas; away at its head we have a passing glimpse of the shoulder below Snowdon's summit, flanked westward by the purpled horn, Cyrn Lâs, whilst Crib Goch and its pinnacles dominate the valley further East. Our way trends steadily uphill, but not until we cross Pont-y-Gromlech (so-called from the gigantic stone on the adjacent roadside) can it be called steep. Thence to the top, a mile or so distant, is a stiff

pull with the impending mountains ever closing in and the scene gathering in wildness and grandeur until we attain Y Gorphwysfa, the "resting-place" at the summit of the Pass, 1170 feet above the level of Carnarvon.

Past some outhouses on our right the finest route up Snowdon begins, and we shall be well repaid if we leave our car and trudge for a mile or two into Cwm Dyli to see Llyn Llydaw and the most graceful and striking setting of Snowdon, with Crib Goch and the greatest of all Welsh precipices, Lliwedd, in close attendance.

A steady down-hill gradient then takes us across the head of Nant Gwynant and we have a lovely view downward over the level strath-like valley to where Llyn Gwynant, backed by Cynicht, glistens in the afternoon sun—a most refreshing sight after the wilds we have just left behind. It is strange that this piece of level valley should be so soothing. Such meadow-land in Kent or Norfolk would simply be commonplace pasturage, but here, contrasted with the mighty mountains enclosing it on both sides, it is a piece of embodied poetry. The old-world Penygwryd Hotel soon comes into sight ahead. Ere long we have entered its shades and are sitting in its famous snuggery, where a veil shall be drawn awhile over the day's proceedings!

Capel Curig is only four miles distant, but the descent to it is the dullest and most featureless stretch on our tour. With the stony slopes of the Glyders on our left, and the moorland stretching out to Moel Siabod ahead, we spin swiftly downward, "thinking of the different kinds of nothing," past the lake and hamlet of Capel Curig and thence, by devious and truly delectable ways, which are described in another chapter, to Bettws-y-coed.

Through the pretty village and its tree-bordered street we steal slowly along until a sharp turn takes us over Waterloo Bridge, a single

steel span, beneath which glides the Conway. We are now in touch with the coast once more and our way lies in close proximity to the river until Llanrwst is reached. Its ancient church, Gwydir Chapel, architecturally ascribed to Inigo Jones ; the old hog-backed bridge across the Conway, and even the famous Gwydir Castle, with the bed of Charles I., and other historical mementoes of Royalty, must be dismissed with bare mention. For our time is up—the 'mountain-dew' of Penygwryd must remain uncontaminated by the health-giving, but inconceivably nasty, drinks of Trefriw, but we can drink in a charming view of the village, backed by fir-clad heights and the beautiful bend of the vale leading upward to Llyn Crafnant, as we quit Llanrwst. Across the river, Dołgarrog and its falls are quickly succeeded by the villages of Caerhun, Llanbedr and Tal-y-Cafn, beyond which the Conway Estuary begins. The westering sun glints along its broad surface. The houses of Glan Conway and, later, of walled Conway itself, with the grim fortress defiantly looking seaward, stand up in dark silhouette against the diffused light ahead ere we leave the estuary on our left and speed thence to Llandudno and our quarters.

CHAPTER II.

From Bangor to Capel Curig.

Llyn Ogwen, Llyn Idwal and the Glyders.

IN common with Llandudno, Carnarvon and Barmouth, Bangor adds to its attractions as a seaside resort easy access to some of the finest mountains in Wales. As a watering-place, however, it falls far short of Llandudno or Barmouth, although its marine and mountain views vie with those of the above places. Bangor itself with its narrow, winding streets, trending for the most part towards the cathedral precincts, presents no feature of special interest and the same may be said of its cathedral, so far as its architecture is concerned. From a historic point of view, however, the building is simply fascinating. Its bishopric dates back to the year 584 and it is thus, probably, older than that of Canterbury. St. Deniol was its founder and first abbot, but twice since his time it has been demolished,—in 1071 by the Saxon King Harold, and in 1404 by Owen Glyndwr. The great Owen Gwynedd lies buried beneath it.

But to detail all that has happened on this time-honoured spot would necessitate a record of the history of Wales, and neither this, nor a consideration of the academic distinction conferred upon Bangor by its University students, must delay our start for Capel Curig. Even the Menai Bridges and the philological charms of the tiny village of Llanfairpwllgwyngillgogerchwyrndrobwllysiliogogogoch across in Anglesey, shall not turn our eyes from the hills beckoning us inland.

Nant Ffrancon, which disputes with Llanberis and Aberglaslyn the premier position amongst Welsh mountain valleys, debouches upon the plain a short four miles south of Bangor. On the way thence we

Nant Francon, from the Glyders

With Y Garn on the left, and Carnedd Dafydd on the right. Llyns Bochllwyd and Ogwen are seen below, with Menai Straits in the distance

"A Cloudy Afternoon"
Llyn Idwal and Glyder Fawr
The Devil's Kitchen is amongst the clouds up on the right

pass the model village of Llandegai, with its church and idyllic cottages, beyond which we trudge along—for the country is too beautiful to be hurried through awheel—locating the various mountain forms as we draw towards them. On our left front are the Carnedds—Llewelyn and Dafydd—and the great rounded hollow of Cwm Llafar carved in Dafydd's breast, with the sombre Black Ladders precipice under the summit ridge. Straight in front is Nant Ffrancon, the Vale of Beavers, with the long wall-like northern face of the Glyders at its head. The heights of Y Garn and Elidr Fawr bound the vale to the right,—truly, an array of mountains unexcelled for rugged grandeur in all Wales. Three miles or so bring us to Bethesda, a typical Welsh mining town, grey and ugly; we heave a sigh of relief as we draw clear of its main street and continue our road under an archway of trees which at first partially blot out the ugly scar and heaps of refuse on our right. These are the Penrhyn slate quarries; as we travel further they fill the eye more and more until they appear to have slashed away half of the mountain side and laid it out in terrace upon terrace of black rock. Our highway, Telford's famous Holyhead road, runs along the left-hand side of the valley and soon takes us out of sight of the disturbing element, thanks to the fact that quarrying operations are almost smokeless.

The green flats below us, through which the Ogwen river threads its way, must, at the time when all the hillsides were clothed with forest, have harboured hundreds of that valuable and marvellous little amphibian, the beaver. Howel Dda, the wise law-making King of the tenth century, endeavoured to preserve them, but his successors had less foresight and nowadays they are extinct hereabouts.

We soon ascend beyond the belts of foliage; the bed of the Ogwen steepens; the stream becomes an impetuous mountain torrent, and the valley seems to end in a great *cul-de-sac* of abrupt precipice. "How do we get out?" is a question asked by every new-comer who ascends

Nant Ffrancon; it is only when we attain nearly to the top of the pass that we come suddenly upon the great gap leading round to the left, between Carnedd Dafydd and the Glyders. Our road climbs steadily upward along the side of the valley until the roar of a waterfall on our right, the Falls of Benglog, heralds our arrival at Ogwen Cottage, beyond which, through the gap mentioned above, lies the wild and secluded Llyn Ogwen, with the serrated ridge of Tryfaen towering above. We are now nearly a thousand feet above Bangor and, except for a few stunted trees in the vicinity of the cottage, the scenery is of the wildest description imaginable—boulder-strewn fellside, bare even of bracken, and long trails of screes surmounted by beetling precipices seamed with deep gorges and black vertical rifts. This is a happy hunting ground of rock-climbers; the cottage is not often entirely deserted by them. What though the fare be rough and mostly mutton? It is, at all events, wholesome, and Mrs. Jones, who, by the way, spoke no English when I first stayed at Ogwen, is a kindly soul and an excellent cook. As for the mutton,

"This dose you'll more or less repeat
On each successive day
Till when you meet a mountain sheep
You'll turn the other way."

But, whether we be rock-climbers or not, we must leave the road here and take a rough path upward past the cottage, following it until it finishes on the shore of Llyn Idwal, the wildest and most impressive mountain lakelet in all "Wild Wales." As we stand on its shore and gaze from the rocky pinnacles of Tryfaen on our left and thence along the great mural precipice of Glyder Fawr, the torrent-seamed crags further round, and the deep black rift of Twll Du, to the picturesque summit of Y Garn on our right, we can easily understand how the local shepherds once believed the Llyn to be the abode of demons, and how they were assured that no bird dare fly over its sombre waters. And

Looking down Twll Du

Llyn Idwal is seen below, with Llyn Ogwen and the slopes of the Carnedds beyond

A Mountain Shepherd

those of us who remember how Idwal, the youthful son of Owen Gwynedd, was murdered here by his foster-father, Dunawt, and flung into the black depths, will perhaps consider that such a wicked crime was very fittingly staged.

Twll Du, or the Devil's Kitchen, in the crags high above the Llyn, is a wonderful gorge, and the view from its top, looking downwards between its vertical walls to Cwm Idwal, Llyn Ogwen and the Carnedds, has no equal of its kind in all Britain. The floor of the "kitchen" is a chaos of great boulders, some of which span the cleft from side to side. One monster, quite low down, effectually bars the way to the inquisitive tourist, but even if he succeed in climbing up this he will ultimately be driven back by a fearsome sixty-foot "pitch" above. The stream of water dashing down this pitch adds to its forbidding nature and renders it, perhaps, the most difficult and dangerous obstacle yet surmounted by expert cragsmen. The rocks on either hand are somewhat loose, and the thin vertical crack in the left wall, by which the ascent is made, has been condemned as unsafe by many of our best climbers. The remembrance of poor Ronald Hudson and Percy Southgate, who lost their lives in essaying the climb, leads me to endorse this opinion, although I plead guilty to being amongst the earliest parties to explore and climb it. It is well worth while to scramble up to its foot, however, and thence, after crossing the stream issuing from it, to strike upward diagonally to the left of the crags until we reach a small cairn of stones. A double back along the top of the crags then brings us to the stream above the "kitchen," which we can follow downwards to the viewpoint mentioned above.

Here we are not far from the top of Glyder Fawr; to skirt its flank and scramble along past Castell y Gwynt ("the Castle of the Winds"), to the wonderful summit of its smaller namesake, Glyder Fach, will well repay us. The wilderness of tumbled crags and enor-

mous boulders, lying wedged across each other in the weirdest fashion imaginable, are as remarkable in their own way as the marvellous view down Nant Ffrancon to Bangor and the Isle of Anglesey. Tryfaen looks fine from here, a weather-beaten, pyramidal obelisk thrusting upward into the blue—the embodiment of grace and stability—whilst in the opposite direction are Moel Siabod and the Snowdon *massif*, with the peerless crown of Y Wyddfa the dominant feature of a perfect mountain landscape. But we are a long way from the road and it is full time we descended. The Gribin, the long narrow ridge running valleywards from a point almost between the Glyders, offers the quickest downward route. An hour's steady descent along this, with Llyn Bochllwyd on our right and Idwal on our left, lands us once more on the highway, but with a vastly enhanced opinion of the "mountain gloom and mountain glory" that invest the cwms of the Glyders.

Our roadway is now fairly level; the air of these higher regions runs like nectar through our veins and lends a fine feeling of physical fitness and exaltation, unknown to lowlier mortals, as we skirt Llyn Ogwen's shores and revel in the prospect of Tryfaen's grim crags and the flowing outlines of the Carnedds opposite. Away up in the wild hollow beyond is Ffynnon Llugwy, a lonely lakelet, whence one of the most beautiful of Welsh rivers has its source. As we near the end of Llyn Ogwen our undivided attention is claimed by Tryfaen, which now assumes the shape of a vast towering spire. This is the counterpart of the view we obtained of it from Glyder Fach, but here we see Tryfaen's full height, and if we care to breast the slopes of the Carnedds for a short distance and regard it thence, we must agree that this is the most remarkable mountain form in Wales. More than this; it is as inaccessible as it looks, for this is the only mountain south of the Tweed which demands that we use our hands if we would attain to its summit. The two weird monoliths that crown it are curiously like

Capel Curig and Llyn Mymbyr

Lliwedd, Snowdon, Crib Goch and Carnedd Ugain are seen from left to right in the background

human beings, so like, indeed, that sceptical tourists wait patiently below for them to move, until convinced of their mistake.

Half-a-mile further we reach the top of the pass and soon cross the infant Llugwy, here an unassuming rivulet, totally unlike the wild torrent that forms Swallow Falls, a few miles down the valley. The lonely farmstead at the base of Tryfaen's great Eastern precipice is Gwernygofuchaf—the Higher Wet Place—opposite to which is Pen y Waen Wen—the Top of the Wet Meadow. We shall not be surprised a mile further along to find Gwernygofisaf—the Lower Wet Place. Very descriptive are these Cymric place names, as tourists during a wet August in Wales will agree. Many an unintelligible jumble of letters hides a meaning at once beautiful and appropriate, however; for instance, over the ridge on our left, is Cwm Eigiau—the Valley of Abysses; Craig Yr Ysfa—the Crag of Craving; Pen Helig Du—the Hill of the Black Willow; Yr Elen—the Nymph, and so on.

We now cross a tract of wild moorland, redolent of heather and bog myrtle, beyond which our road bends away to the left towards the lowlands. Trees greet our sight once more; the song of birds, the music of the river and the trill of children's laughter fill our ears as we saunter down into the little upland village of Capel Curig.

CHAPTER III.

From Llangollen to Dolgelley.

TO the nature-lover who finds his chief joy in the solitude of barren regions and rugged heights the Vale of Llangollen has but little to offer. Not by the wildest flight of imagination could the gentle contours of its wood-girt hillsides and its varied river scenery be called grand. But to those to whom nature in her softer moods appeals; to those who love to wander under leafy canopies, along flower-bordered paths and through a country-side rich in history and folklore, this valley must be a constant pleasure.

Its river, too, is a source of continual delight. The Dee sparkles and foams over jagged beds of moss-grown rock and through beautiful gorges of ever-changing character which impart to it a charm that can only be equalled by some of the most picturesque Highland rivers. Indeed, as we look upward from the bridge at Llangollen on a wild, March afternoon and watch the water hurtling over the rocks, seething along the rapids and eddying into foam under the arches, we can easily imagine ourselves above the Spey or Dochart. But these rivers can boast no such bridge as this. With its four stalwart spans and general air of old-world solidity, for it was first built in 1345, it is one of the sights of Wales. Certainly, it is the chief feature of Llangollen, and this is saying a good deal, for the neighbourhood is rich in show places. The town itself is not remarkable for beauty or historical associations, but as a tourist centre it leaves nothing to be desired. From its most famous hotel, "The Royal," beautifully situated across the bridge on the banks of the Dee, and once the headquarters of Princess Victoria, to homely private apartments, the accommodation caters for all tastes and purses.

The Dee and Llangollen Bridge

The Ruins of Castell Dinas Bran are seen on the left-hand skyline

Castell Dinas Brân.

After the Dee and its bridge, no doubt the fanglike ruins which top the isolated eminence north of the town will claim our notice. This is Castell Dinas Brân, irreverently called "Crow Castle" by the tripper who, for three months in the year, makes it his own. However, in spite of all the indignities put upon it this is a wonderful place. It is of such an age that even the boldest antiquary will not hazard a guess at its origin. Perchance it was a stronghold of the early Britons, when they resisted first the Roman and then the Saxon invaders. The trenches around its summit give countenance to this theory for they are of a much earlier date than the present ruins. From the Roman period until the thirteenth century it would appear to have no certain history. Then Gruffydd ap Madog Malor, son of the founder of Valle Crucis Abbey, lived there and was succeeded by various families. The last of these were the Trevors, and it is strange that the only authentic chronicles of this grizzly fortress should be those of love, not war. The daughter of the house, Myfanwy, a most beautiful girl, was beloved by a poet, Owen Gutyen, and one of his odes to her was found after the castle was dismantled. Poor fellow! Nothing came of his poetry. She was noble, he poverty-stricken, and his melancholy ode—too long to quote here—must have brought him but cold comfort.

The height of Dinas Brân above Llangollen is just upon eight hundred feet, and everybody of average sound wind and limb should undertake the climb. The view from the summit, far into Salop on the one hand, and away down the beautiful valley, "where Deva spreads her wizard stream," backed by some of the Snowdonian Giants on the other, is one of great range and beauty. And if the popping of ginger beer bottles from the present summit restaurant disturb not our reverie, we may reconstruct for ourselves the history of this pile of ruins during those fierce and sanguinary wars of the Welshmen against the legions of the Kings of England.

The Ladies of Llangollen.

From Myfanwy of ancient memory, lest I be charged with discourtesy, I must pass to two other famous maidens who lived near. The "Ladies of Llangollen," to give them their proper title, lived at Plas Newydd, a short distance up the hill from the Holyhead road. Irish by nationality and of excellent lineage, Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby fled the blandishments of all male creatures and sought retreat in this then secluded vale. They vowed eternal friendship to each other and, to the credit of their sex be it said, they kept the vow! If their description, given by the elder Matthews, is accurate one can quite understand that they were not in serious jeopardy so far as the men were concerned. "Oh, such curiosities! I was nearly convulsed . . . . as they are seated there is not one point to distinguish them from men; the dressing and powdering of the hair; their well-starched neck-cloths, and regular beaver hats. They looked just like two respectable superannuated old clergymen!" They attracted a good deal of attention, of course, and were visited by many notabilities of their day—the Duke of Wellington, Sir Walter Scott and Wordsworth amongst others. Those who had the temerity to call twice were expected to take a small present, and no doubt "the ladies" got together a rare collection of knick-knacks, many of which, however, have now vanished. One of considerable moment is still left to us—a short ode by Wordsworth, which he composed at Plas Newydd in 1824. Many of us would have been proud indeed to be addressed by the greatest poet of his day, but not so these queer old ladies, for they very strongly resented the patronage that crept through the words, "a low-roofed cot on Deva's banks," in which he described their beloved Plas. I expect they had patronised the Rydal poet pretty extensively and it must be admitted that he turned the tables on them very neatly. The poem, amongst his "Miscellaneous Sonnets," is well worth looking up.

Valle Crucis Abbey
Near Llangollen

The Old Bridge at Llanuwchllyn

Valle Crucis Abbey.

Having thus done our duty by the ladies, let us turn our steps towards the "World's End," in the Vale of the Cross. At the entrance to this valley stands the Abbey of Valle Crucis. This fine ruin, one of the oldest examples of pure Gothic architecture in Britain, was founded by Madog, of Dinas Brân memory, in 1200. It was a house of Cistercians, who, thanks to the artfulness of their Bishops, appropriated most of the good things in their vicinity. Being more or less holy people they annexed the fishery of the sacred river, the Dee, and to their catches they added "four courses a day, served on bright silver dishes." These they washed down with excellent claret. For three hundred years or so they and their successors lived well, better, probably, than the "baron or squire or knight of the shire," until Henry VIII., a dreadful person where religious houses were concerned, disbanded them. They were turned out and their home fell into neglect.

The remains of their Abbey are beautifully ornamented, and, amongst other things, the arched doorway, three lancet-shaped windows and a small wheel-window piercing the gable are in an excellent state of preservation, as are the chapter-house and many of the walls. It needs but little imagination to build up the chancel and re-people it with tonsured white-robed monks, and to fill the nave with a motley crowd seeking sanctuary, inhabitants of a country-side ever in the throes of red war—a pleasant occupation for a summer afternoon as we stroll along the level greensward or watch the trout rise in the old fish-pond outside.

Looking up the valley from the Abbey we can see another of Llangollen's "lions." This is the "Pillar of Eliseg." It stands in a neighbouring meadow and, as we stroll up to it, we pass along several well-marked "cultivation terraces," which, curiously enough, seem to have escaped the comment of other chroniclers of these parts. They are the predecessors of the Savoyard vineyards of the present day, and

it is probable that Eliseg himself could have told us their date. Indeed, it is quite possible that he helped to lay them down. The Pillar itself is a sorry object nowadays. We are told by antiquarians that it is over a thousand years old; it certainly looks it. Whether it was the original cross after which the valley was named, or whether it was merely a commemorative column, must be left to the antiquarians, but, judging from their diversity of opinion on the matter, they seem to know precious little about it. For my own part I prefer to look up to Dinas Brân or the terraced limestone heights of Eglwyseg above, for this miserable remnant of a Pillar is but a child compared to them, and there can be no two opinions about their relative dignity and presence. Wherefore let us leave it and wend our steps up the valley beyond.

For four miles or so we trudge along, until, after the last outposts of civilization have been left behind and our road has dwindled to the merest lane, we find ourselves near a lonely *cul-de-sac* in the mountains—a veritable "World's End,"—and face to face with a fine old Tudor homestead. This is Plas Eglwyseg, once the home of Cromwell's brother-in-law, Colonel Jones of Maesygarnedd (thank goodness it is only my duty to write the word, and not to pronounce it!) Our space forbids a description of this place, but one episode in its history must be recounted. For it was hither that Owen, son of King Cadogan, brought the beautiful Nest, better known as the "Helen of Wales." Once the *protégée* of Henry I., by whom she had a son who was afterwards Earl of Gloucester, she was ultimately married to the Earl of Pembroke. Owen, hearing of her great beauty, succeeded in obtaining an interview with her, and so smitten was he that he determined to seize her and carry her off. A pretty tall order this, even for those days, but Owen was nothing daunted. With a band of trusty friends, as dare-devil as himself, he set fire one dark night to the castle of Pem-

broke. The Earl escaped down a drain and our hero and his friends hurried Nest away to the seclusion of Eglwyseg. There was a fine turmoil. Pembroke raved, King Cadogan entreated his son to capitulate, and Henry I. on his distant throne impotently tore his hair. As for events at Eglwyseg—fair ladies in those days admired a brave man, whatever his morals, and no doubt Nest and her hero led a merry enough life. All Wales was in an uproar, however. Men were sent hot-foot to the "World's End," and when further resistance was futile, Owen fled to Ireland, while Nest returned to her husband. The path that runs along the deep glen behind the old house was the one used by Owen and his friends when they returned from their wild escapade.

But Wales is full of such memories, and we must rigorously eschew them if we are to reach Dolgelley before nightfall. All who visit Llangollen will, as a matter of course, ascend Moel-y-Geraint (Barber's Hill), a half-hour's walk from the town, for the view thence is the finest in the valley. But we must make a start for Corwen and Bala. After having sent our conveyance, whether motor or landau, along to Berwyn, we can cross Llangollen bridge and strike up the pathway to the old canal. This is fed by the Dee, and the walk along the tow-path for a mile-and-a-half to the Horse Shoe Falls, where the river feeds the canal, should not be missed. The course of the Dee hereabouts is really beautiful and the view as we cross the Chain Bridge, to gain the road, forms a fitting last memory of a truly delectable spot.

We are now upon Telford's Holyhead road, a highway that for eighty miles traverses some of the finest mountain scenery in Britain, and throughout its entire length, so wonderfully engineered is it, scarcely possesses a hill worthy of the name. We are now in the gateway of Llangollen Vale, and after a mile of gentle ascent we find our-

selves above the line of foliage and gazing down a wide strath dotted with white farmsteads and lush ploughlands, bordered by the heights of Moel-y-Gamelin and Moel Morfydd on the one hand and running up to the Berwyn mountains on the other; surely the richest and loveliest prospect in the whole Vale of Dee.

We are now entering the country of Owen Glyndwr, the hero of Cymrwy, the man who for many years defied all England and with his bands of sturdy Welshmen made such a magnificent fight to free his country from the foreigner's yoke. The strip of land which was the first cause of his quarrel lies just beyond Glyn-Dyfrdwy, the village we pass at the foot of the hill, about six miles from Llangollen. The scenery varies but little until we reach Corwen, a dull old-fashioned town possessing little of interest beyond its church and the fact that it was Glyndwr's head-quarters. Here it was that he arranged his forces before the battle of Shrewsbury, and, standing at a point now marked by a great cairn above the town, gazed down on "nearly forty square miles of his own land." Below it is the church with its eighth-century cross, and, on the lintel of the South Door, a mark that tradition ascribes to the dagger of Glyndwr.

About a mile past Corwen the Holyhead road branches off to the right towards Bettws-y-coed, but we keep straight on through Llangar, with its old church, and Cynwyd village, and are then fairly in the Vale of Edeyrnion. A restful valley this, rich in memories of Glyndwr and his men, and dotted with relics and remains—at one place a stone circle of Druidical times, at another a mound of Roman origin. A steadily rising road then takes us through Llandrillo. Thence, with the valley ever narrowing and its sides clothed with rich verdure, we cross the river and pass the village of Llandderfel. Trees meet overhead, the Dee meanders lazily through the meadows on our

Tal-y-Llyn

The gap in the distant hills is the Pass of Tal-y-Llyn, beyond which lies Dolgelley

Cader Idris

Viewed from above Torrent Walk

left, and for a couple of miles we jog peacefully along until a turn in the vale reveals the spire and buildings of Bala.

Unlike many Welsh towns and villages, Bala can conscientiously be given a word of praise on the score of picturesqueness. Its chief street is of a decent width and, bordered as it is with trees, reminds one vaguely of some of the Rhenish villages. A general air of cleanliness pervades the place, and its staple present-day industry—the accommodation of tourists and sportsmen—is given fitting consideration. As we pass along the main street we must notice the Calvinistic Methodist Training College on our right. Bala was a great centre in last century's Nonconformist revival and it still often holds gigantic Methodist meetings, when the name of its patron, Mr. Charles, is loudly extolled. In 1802, the Welsh translation of the Bible was out of print, and many people had to walk five or six miles to indulge their desire for a "quiet chapter." He it was who fought for its being reprinted, and the success that crowned his efforts is fittingly commemorated by his statue which dominates the boulevard of Bala. Close by is a monument of a different kind—Tomen-y Bala, a mound built by the Romans and which tradition tells us was identical with Mount Ararat. This is not bad, even for a Welsh tradition ! The only confirmation I have discovered was in a visitors' book at the White Lion Hotel—an excellent, first-class house, by the way—which at any rate would seem to emphasise the need of an Ararat.

"The weather depends on the moon as a rule,
And I've found that the saying is true;
For at Bala it rains when the moon's at the full
And it rains when the moon's at the new.
When the moon's at the quarter then down comes the rain,
At the half it's no better, I ween;
When the moon's at three quarters it's at it again,
And it rains as well mostly between!

It is only fair to say that I, personally, have never seen it rain at Bala,

and no doubt droughts are as frequent there as elsewhere amongst the mountainous parts of Cymrwy.

Bala Lake, or Llyn Tegid, next claims our attention. This is one of the three largest sheets of water in the Principality, Llyn Vyrnwy and Tall-y-llyn being the others, but as regards natural beauty Bala is only third. Gently sloping moorland forms its chief setting, with here and there a craggy headland and here and there a few trees. "Softly beautiful" it has been called by one of its most ardent admirers, and perhaps this is as great a eulogy as truth will permit. Given a dead calm on the water, however, the view up the lake, with the lofty ridge of the Arans Benllyn and Fawddwy and the distant mass of Cader reflected in the water, is one that lingers in the memory.

A good mile beyond the town we pass the yew-girt church of Llan-y-cil, where lie the remains of Mr. Charles, and thence our road hugs the lake shore pretty closely until Llanuwchllyn (which the natives pronounce something like a gurgle ending in a sigh) is reached. Aran Benllyn looks its best from here, as also does its great prototype, Arenig Fawr, opposite; indeed, since we left Llangollen's gateway we have seen nothing more beautiful than our present surroundings. It is well to make the most of them for in another mile or two we enter a wild moorland down which flows the stream of the Dyfrdwy. A narrow and ever-rising stretch of road ensues, and it is a welcome relief to top the pass and find ourselves gazing down the valley of Wnion, with the Arans on our left and Cader Idris in front.

Our way down to Dolgelley is now a continual feast of good things. The rivulet dashes over a rough and stony bed beautifully fringed with trees, through which we catch ravishing glimpses of Cader and its heather-breasted outpost, Mynydd Moel, while away down in

the distance the afternoon sun glints on Cardigan Bay and shimmers out to the Atlantic as far as the eye can reach. For nearly five miles our way lies steadily downward until, after passing Bont Newydd and the mansions and grounds of Dolserau, we swing round to the left across the Wnion bridge and reach our journey's end.

CHAPTER IV.

From Dolgelley to Beddgelert, via Barmouth and Harlech.

"DID you ever see anything so beautiful as a Welsh valley? We have higher mountains in Scotland, finer scenery about the more beautiful English Lakes, but neither Scotland nor England, no, nor all Switzerland, can exhibit anything so tranquil, romantic, snug and beautiful as a Welsh valley. There is nothing like it, I believe, in the world!" Thus spake that genial-hearted philosopher and excellent judge of scenery, Christopher North, regarding the valley which contains Dolgelley.

The Professor's ardour has been handed down to its present day *habitués* and, indeed, when we recall the diversity of charm that conduces to such a wonderful whole—the surrounding mountains ranging from the stern mural precipices of Cader to the soft, undulating, outlines of Moel Offrwm, the beautiful streams of the Aran and Wnion, with their moss-grown boulders and foliage-fringed banks; the upland glens, and that glorious estuary of the Mawddach expanding to the sea at Barmouth; the open valley dotted with homesteads and velvety meadows, redolent of peace and contentment; and the quaint old-world town, with its square-towered church nestling 'twixt the mountains and the sea—it is not strange that this unique spot should draw hosts of admirers who will yield to no other locality so heartwhole an enthusiasm.

My own first acquaintance with the wilder districts of Wales was made here many years ago, and although it has been my good fortune to spend many subsequent months amongst the mountains and vales of Cymrwy, this is the place that I would choose were I faring

The "Precipice Walk"

Near Dolgelley, looking towards Snowdonia

Torrent Fall

On the Torrent Walk, near Dolgelley

to Wales to-morrow. The little town itself, however, makes no special appeal, although it is well enough in its way. The facts that Owen Glyndwr held his Parliament here in ancient times, and that it is the capital of Merionethshire at present, appear to be its chief claims to notice. Like most of the Welsh towns and villages, Dolgelley owes everything to its surroundings. It is the centre of a wealth of excursions. For the ardent cragsman the cliffs of Cader and Craig y Cae are irreproachable, whilst to the less strenuous lover of nature the "Precipice Walk" and the "Torrent Walk"—both equally dangerous by the way—are a great joy. Fish abound in the adjacent streams and rise readily to the fly, provided the angler be wily enough to choose the right one. For the antiquary there are, among other things, the old Abbey of Cymmer and the high grounds of Nannau Park, with its tradition of the "blasted oak," whilst the botanist, artist or geologist will find the countryside a constant delight.

In a district so rich in good things, it is difficult to select any typical excursion, for that is all our space will permit, but perhaps that by way of the Torrent Walk, Bont Newydd and thence past Nannau to the Precipice Walk of Moel Cynwch is one of the favourites. To the foot of Torrent Walk is about two miles, and the "walk" itself is about a mile in length. After crossing Aran Bridge, we follow the high road a mile or so until a lane diverges to the left. Down this we saunter and just before it crosses a bridge we turn through a gate on the right. Thence a path, at places continued by steps, ascends alongside the stream—the Clywedog—and takes us through a veritable paradise,

> "Where the young river gods in maddest play
> Come laughing silvery laughter, lightly leaping adown the cliffs."

Stream, woodland, rocks and glade, all combine to minister to our sense of the beautiful. Moss-grown boulders, splashing waterfalls, eddying pools and interlacing foliage regale our sight for a full mile until,

looking backward, we have a glorious view down-stream, with Y Garn towering up grandly across the valley. We now make for Pen-y-Groes Post Office and then turn to the left down a steep lane, very pretty and very Welsh, which sweeps round to Bont Newydd. Thence by devious ways, never apparently going in the right direction, but fully described in the guide books, Nannau Lodge becomes our aim.

A short distance before we reach it, a sundial will be noticed to the right in the kitchen garden of Nannau. This marks the spot where the famous "Blasted Oak" stood. A sinister story this, one that Scott embodies in *Marmion*, and the Rev. George Warrington has turned into a ballad. The tale goes that a cousin of Owen Glyndwr, one Howard Selé, lived at Nannau and that there was bad blood between the two. The Abbot of Cymmer, in pursuit of his peaceful calling, brought them together and effected a reconciliation. Some time afterwards the cousins were walking in the grounds, when Selé espied a deer. Glyndwr suggested a trial of his marksmanship. Selé feinted to aim at the deer and then, turning suddenly, aimed his shaft full at his cousin's breast. There, undoubtedly, would have been an end of Glyndwr, and incidentally of much trouble to England, but under his coat he wore a breastplate; the arrow fell harmless to the ground. A fierce combat ensued in which Glyndwr slew his cousin, and then dropped his body down the hollow bole of a gigantic oak tree growing near by; after which he summoned his men and burned Nannau to the ground. Selé was soon missed, of course. His distracted wife and her retainers searched high and low, but without success, and it was not until forty years afterwards that his skeleton was found in the oak, Glyndwr, then an exile and on his deathbed, having sent a retainer to recount the whole story. The tree became haunted. Horrible sounds, low groans and so forth, issued from it, and none of the natives dared go near the "hollow oak of demons" after

nightfall. In the meantime Nannau had been rebuilt, and the oak stood until 1813 when, during a hot still night in July, it collapsed from old age. A weird story, and we can leave it there, not enquiring too carefully into its truth, with the present sundial to mark its scene.

Nannau itself, not open to the public, is the home of the Vaughans and is said to be the highest country seat in Britain, which accounts for the stiff pull we have had to reach its level. The long narrow sheet of water which our "walk" skirts is Llyn Cynwch, Dolgelley's reservoir. Low hills, liberally sprinkled with larch and oak trees, give it claims to mere prettiness in all directions, except to the South, where, with the jagged range of Cader reflected in its surface, it almost attains to the beautiful.

We are now traversing the upper reaches of Moel Cynwch, but the "precipice" part of our walk does not begin until we round the mountain's extremity and overlook the glen of the Mawddach. The fell side below is fairly steep and the path at places narrow and outwardly sloping, but of danger there is none. To compensate for this, however, there is a magnificent view. Opposite to us are the purple slopes and bracken-strewn flanks of Y Garn ; peering over its shoulder in the far distance many of the giants of Snowdonia rear their stately forms. Cader Idris, from Mynydd Moel to Tyrau Mawr, fills in the prospect Southward, whilst athwart the valley at its foot is a beautiful vista of fertile, undulating countryside. Down its centre flashes the Mawddach, ever widening as it recedes, at high tide a noble estuary, leaving at low tide a beautiful beach of yellow gleaming sand, until it merges in Cardigan Bay near Barmouth, some of the houses of which we can just discern against a background of ocean.

Very soon after this we can descend and pass Cymmer Abbey, which is to Dolgelley what Valle Crucis Abbey is to Llangollen. It, also, was a Cistercian Monastery, founded two years before Valle

Crucis, and it was dissolved by Henry VIII., but Cymmer is not in such a good state of preservation. It is well worth a visit, however, before we turn our steps towards Dolgelley.

The waterfalls of the Ganllywd Glen—Rhaiadr Du, Rhaiadr Mawddach and Pistyll y Cain—are amongst the favourite sights of the neighbourhood; not, perhaps, because of their own intrinsic charms, which mining operations have greatly desecrated, but because of the beauty of their approaches. Tyn-y-Groes, which is passed *en route*, is one of the sweetest spots in Wales; the river scenes up and down the glen from this favoured corner are unexcelled in the entire Principality.

"O Cambrian river! with slow music gliding
By pastoral halls, old woods and ruined towers;
Now 'midst thy reeds and golden willows hiding,
Now gleaming forth by some rich bank of flowers!"

There is a choice of two roads to Barmouth, one on either side of the Mawddach, but that on the northern bank affords such magnificent views of Cader Idris that we really have no alternative. This ten-mile stretch of roadway has been instanced by competent judges as the most beautiful walk in Britain, and John Ruskin has left on record, in his *Modern Painters*, that the Mawddach estuary, as seen from near Barmouth, affords one of the three finest prospects in Europe. Whether these good people's estimate is correct or not I leave to others to decide, for I am a Lakes man myself and flattering superlatives applied to other districts are a direct incitement to argument!

Curved roadway, following the indented shores of the estuary; rock-cuttings through the hillside, clothed by a wealth of wild flowers, bracken and woodland; moss-grown walls from which peep yellow stone-crop and purple toadflax; ivy-clad, eaved cottages, with clematis, fuchsia and jasmine shedding a blaze of colour; and, through the interstices of the undergrowth, gleams of silvern water and golden

Rhaiadr Du

Near Dolgelley

Old Barmouth

The Railway Bridge and Estuary are seen on the right

sand, with every now and then a glimpse heavenward to the everlasting hills—these are some of the joys that fall to us as we wend westward to Barmouth. And as a *bonne bouche* we have that glorious view at high tide up a mile-wide expanse of blue water, backed by a beauteous combination of lowland richness and the stern craggy heights of Cader,

> "That rock where the storms have their dwelling,
> The birthplace of phantoms, the home of the cloud,
> Around it for ever deep music is swelling,
> The voice of the mountain wind solemn and loud."

Then we round a corner and descend into the town.

Barmouth is one of the most beautiful watering places in the kingdom and possesses the most varied attractions. For it enjoys not only the artificial delights peculiar to the seaside, but adds to them all the pleasures of mountainous inland scenery. In Ruskin's time, when the old cottages straggled up and down the cliff side wherever room could be found for a foundation, and they were not intermixed with present-day shops and lodging-houses, the place must have presented a quaint spectacle. Even to-day it is worth going a long way to see. Mention must be made of the Bridge that spans the estuary, and the Cambrian Railways Company, to whom it belongs, are to be complimented upon the minimum amount of scenic damage they have caused by its erection. Indeed, when one remembers the view it affords of Cader Idris on the one hand, Diphwys on the other, the estuary below and the blue Arans beyond, the greatest purist must admit that the half-mile long promenade, for the bridge carries this as well as the railway line, more than atones for its evidence of man's handiwork.

Our road to Harlech passes up the long street that constitutes the main part of Barmouth and emerges beyond, with Cardigan Bay below us, and the mountains stretching ever upwards inland. Beyond the fact that numerous cromlechs, Roman encampments and other

objects dear to the antiquarian heart are profusely scattered about the mountains on our right, the road calls for no special comment and we travel peacefully along for mile after mile, until, after striking slightly inland and climbing a steep hill, we are suddenly confronted with a most startling and dramatic scene. The grey embattled pile of Harlech Castle—high-perched, four-squared and round-towered—the ideal castle of childhood's dreams—confronts us quite close at hand. It is outlined against the magnificent array of distant Snowdon and its satellites, Cynicht, Moelwyn and all their giant brood. Out on our left a steep drop almost to sea-level is succeeded by the blue waters of Tremadoc Bay, across which glisten the housetops of Pwllheli and Criccieth and the ruins of its castle, with the Rivals rising grandly into the heavens beyond. Truly, a scene of singular charm, and one that must leave "deposited upon the silent shore of memory" an impression that will ever remain amongst our most treasured thoughts.

The great castle itself, now, alas! but a shell, has witnessed some of the sternest sieges recorded in English history. We cannot stay to recount them, but it was one of these, during the Wars of the Roses, that occasioned the finest of all Welsh melodies, "The March of the Men of Harlech." Nowadays, nothing more martial is heard than the "tooting" of motor horns, the shrill scream of railway engines and loud cries of "Fore!" as the "wily sphere" is urged across one of the finest golf links in Wales. This course, the Royal St. David's, lies between the castle and the sea. But the mountains call and we must away. Down a steep hill, past the houses of Harlech that dot the cliff-side, our road stretches away towards Snowdonia. Across the Dwyryd bridge we encounter a small village with a big name—Penrhyndeudraeth—and thence we traverse an expanse of flat country with the fine cone of Cynicht ever beckoning us on.

Aberglaslyn.

Cynicht has been called the "Matterhorn of Wales," and the name is not inapt. Outlined against a twilit sky, with its details merged into a purple mass, it stands fanglike above the foothills and dominates its surroundings in much the same way as does its great Swiss prototype above Zermatt. As we approach the mountains, it recedes behind lesser heights, but ere long we come quite suddenly upon the "tit-bit" of our route—the bridge and pass of Aberglaslyn. And here again we must go to Switzerland for an analogy. For, as we stand upon the single-arched, ivy-clad stone bridge and gaze up at the towering cliffs overhead, on which the stunted pinetrees find precarious footing, we might just as well be in the Gorge du Trient or the Val Tournanche; even the wonderful Tyrolese Eggenthal has nothing better to show. One detail is even improved upon, and that is the merry stream of the Glaslyn—no foul, muddied glacier river, but a crystal-clear mountain rill, purling over a green bed of moss-grown boulders. The roadway runs alongside it for a distance all too short and then debouches upon a wide valley, with the shapely peak of Snowdon beyond and the village of Beddgelert nestling against its lower slopes.

CHAPTER V.

The Heart of Wales.

From Beddgelert to Bettws-y-coed.

AT Beddgelert it is only necessary to cross the bridge spanning the Glaslyn to step from Merioneth to Carnarvon, for the river hereabouts, and down through the pass of Aberglaslyn, forms the boundary of the counties.

To Carnarvon belong the highest and most impressive mountains of Cymrwy, whilst Merioneth is the most uniformly hilly county, and it is very fitting that both counties should have a share in the most picturesque and romantic Welsh mountain village, for such, undoubtedly, is Beddgelert.

Beddgelert stands at the entrance to Nants Gwynant and Colwyn, and is protected on the north by the rugged outposts of Snowdon, whilst to the east and west Cynicht and Moel Hebog and their dependencies form but little less worthy sentinels. As a centre for mountain ramblers Beddgelert is one of the best, and in it they will find first-class accommodation, whether it be of the hotel variety or that known as "homely." The Royal Goat Hotel is second to none in Wales; its genial proprietor, who is also the manager, knows his mountains intimately and is tireless in seeking the comfort and welfare of his guests—facts that I mention because former owners neglected the place and caused much disappointment. In the way of private apartments, Glan Afon, under the care of excellent Mrs. Powell, stands easily first.

Beddgelert is famous for its legend; even Helvellyn's tragedy is not more widely known. How Prince Llewelyn missed his hound Gelert when out hunting one day; how, upon returning home, it greeted

Harlech Castle

Beddgelert and Snowdon

The highest snow-clad peak on the left is Snowdon, Yr Aran is below it immediately to the right, whilst Lliwedd is the next peak

him with blood-covered muzzle; how he found his infant son's cradle upset, and, jumping to the conclusion that Gelert had been guilty of child murder, he killed it on the spot, only to discover later that a wolf had entered his house and that

> "His gallant hound the wolf had slain
> To save Llewelyn's heir."

Our sympathy with Llewelyn's grief when he gazed at his faithful hound's dead body will be tempered by the reflection that a similar story was engraved on a rock at Limerick, and that the same circumstances adorn a Persian drama. The tale, however, may be true, in spite of its parallels.

The peculiar rude stones in the meadow south of the village require an explanation if the legend is only another dog story, as also does the name of the village itself. There are those who say that this is called after a saint, Kelert, but I prefer the more romantic story of Gelert, with its touch of humanity.

It needs considerable strength of mind to select any particular excursion from Beddgelert, so great are the charms of those in the other directions. An exception, however, may safely be made in the case of the route up Nant Gwynant to Penygwryd, for it takes us through one of the loveliest valleys in Wales. Such, at least, is my humble opinion. After crossing the bridge over the Colwyn, our road strikes to the right and for a mile or so follows the crystal waters of the Gwynant until we enter the shade of an outstanding rocky hillock. Let us salute this with due respect, for it is Dinas Emrys, once the abiding place of King Vortigern. On its summit are the remains of the ramparts he raised against the Saxons, whom he had invited to Britain.

For long he tried to build his fortress on the marsh below, but his councillors assured him that its foundations would never stand in

such a place unless he sprinkled them with the blood of a child born of a pure virgin—a subtle way of saying that he was attempting the impossible. He, simple warrior, took what they said literally, however, ransacked his kingdom and found an unmarried lady who averred that she was a vestal virgin and that a small boy, whom she produced, was her son. Superstition stopped at nothing in those days. Vortigern believed her and ordered the sacrifice to be made. The boy, however, so confounded and awed the priests with his almost uncanny wisdom that they decided he would be better left alone. So his life was spared, and he persuaded the King to build his castle on the top of Dinas Emrys. The foundations then stood, of course, and the lad afterwards became the famous prophet, Merlin ("Merddin Emrys"), reader of the stars, chief support of Vortigern and the greatest of ancient British bards.

A short mile brings us to a very pretty lakelet, Llyn Dinas, called after the eminence I have just described. The hills across the Llyn are conspicuous more for their beauty of colouring than for their contour, but as we near its head and look backward there is a grand view of Moel Hebog, with its massive shoulders beautifully framed between the walls of the valley we have just ascended. The mountains on our left soon begin to open up, and the rugged recesses of Cwm y Llan, flanked by Yr Aran and Lliwedd, with Y Wyddfa, the summit of Snowdon, at its head, absorb our undivided attention for a while. A small hamlet with nestling farmsteads soon give way to a lovely and fertile glen, with the Gwynant brawling down its centre; then our road bends to the right and we come into full view of the loveliest lake in all Wales. Even the English Lakes themselves can show nothing more gemlike or perfect in its setting than Llyn Gwynant. Small it certainly is; not more than a mile long, but "good stuff laps up in la'al bundles," as we say in Cumberland. The surrounding mountains are on a grand scale, for the

Llyn Dinas

with Moel Hebog beyond

Llyn Gwynant and Yr Aran

pointed summit of Yr Aran and the bare stone-strewn sides of Lliwedd tower up nearly three thousand feet above the wooded slopes of the Llyn. To laze in a boat with the water lapping dreamily along its sides; to catch the gleam of a trout as it flashes over the stones beneath; to drift at will past seductive creeks and bays, or glide placidly along under a canopy of leaves—in short, as Omar Khayyam puts it, to be

> "Here, with a Loaf of Bread beneath the Bough,
> A Flask of Wine, a Book of Verse and Thou
> Beside me singing in the Wilderness
> And wilderness is Paradise enow."

For a mile the road follows the lake's margin pretty closely. The beauty of the scene is enhanced, and the back-ground of mountains stands up grandly, as we near its upper end and begin a steady climb along the right-hand side of the valley. As we rise we catch elusive glimpses of a peak coyly hiding at the head of the side-valleys, until, when Llyn Gwynant is about two miles behind, a most glorious mountain form bursts into full view on our left. The grim thousand foot precipice of Lliwedd bounds it on one side and the ridge of Crib Goch, with its sharp Eastern extremity, stretches away on the other. Cwm Dyli discharges its stream in a series of beautiful cascades to the floor of the strath at our feet, and there, at the head of the recess, between the craggy bastions mentioned above and far beyond the brawling cascades, stands the "Queen of Welsh Mountains," with the shining precipice of Y Wyddfa lifting its head aloft in an irreproachable glory of form and environment. Of all the views of Snowdon this is the grandest; there are very few passers-by but pause awhile and gaze, and carry away with them this view as the outstanding memory of their visit to Wales. But the retrospect down Gwynant Vale, with the waters of the Llyn "set like a sparkling gem amidst the encircling hills," approaches in its own pretty fashion almost as near to perfection.

Both views are lost as we near the top of the ridge, and our

interest centres on the long, grey mountain inn of Penygwryd, with the Glyders stretching away behind—the type of snug, alluring hostelry Falstaff had in his mind's eye when he exclaimed, "Shall I not take mine ease at mine inn!" Certainly, it looks most inviting, this oasis with its windswept trees before the doorway, and we must step inside. Many famous people have taken their ease here, and their exercise hereabouts, and it is still the trysting place of all true lovers of the Welsh mountains.

Hither came Charles Kingsley, in 1856, with Tom Hughes (author of "Tom Brown's School Days") and Tom Taylor, then editor of *Punch*, and many are the records they have left in verse and prose of the jolly times they had. They botanised, fished, sketched, climbed the mountains, and tore their clothes! Thus Tom Hughes, in the old visitor's book:—

> "Oh, my dear name's-sake's breeches, you never see the like,
> He bust them all so shameful, a crossing of a dyke,
> But Mrs. Owen patched them as careful as a mother
> With flannel of three colours—she hadn't got no other."

We shall probably see such patches now if we can catch a back view of the rock-climbers! Kingsley's novel, *Two Years Ago*, describes the inn and Harry Owen, its most famous landlord, with a wealth of true affection, and the chapter on the Glyders, up which Vavasour rushed on that stormy night, forms excellent reading. The inn is much altered since Harry Owen's time. "Rough and ready," it used to be called; more rough than ready, no doubt, and present-day visitors are fortunate in finding it in every way an up-to-date first-class house, around which, however, the old-world romance still hovers. It is an ideal spot hard upon a thousand feet above sea level; lucky the man who can spend a holiday there, as I know from my own experience.

Penygwryd stands at the parting of the ways. The road to the

left runs through the Pass of Llanberis to Carnarvon; we follow that to the right and begin the steady three-mile descent towards Capel Curig. On our left, as we stroll along, are the stony flanks of the little Glyder (of which more will be found in the second chapter), whilst on our right front Moel Siabod rises above the waters of distant Llyn Mymbyr. The intervening space is moorland, and, except when autumn tinges it with rich colouring, it is dreary and featureless. The Gwryd stream cheers us on our way until we pass the lakes and arrive at Capel Curig, one of the oldest tourist centres in the country. The church, post office, hotel and straggling houses that go to form the village are only remarkable because of their situation. They stand at the junction of three valleys—Nant-y-Gwryd, which we have just traversed; the wild upland Vale of Llugwy, extending westward beyond the Glyders towards Nant Francon; and the beautifully wooded glen down which the Llugwy wanders to Bettws-y-coed. The richly coloured, undulating contours of Moel Siabod, the most popular mountain hereabouts, have a quiet beauty of their own and are an excellent foil to the grand Snowdon *massif*, which dominates the scene. Seen from this distance its spurs and ridges, Lliwedd, Carnedd Ugain and Crib Goch—which go to form the "horseshoe" of Snowdon—assume their proper proportions, and the shapely peak of Y Wyddfa towers majestically above the rugged and jagged forms of its dependencies. It is lost to sight, not without a sigh of regret, behind the shoulder of Moel Siabod as we wend towards Bettws-y-coed. Sundry pretty cottages and hotels line the roadside at intervals for about a couple of miles until Pont Cyfyng, beneath which rushes a lovely stretch of the Llugwy, is passed. Thence for a mile or two the valley scenery beggars description. Steep verdure-clad hill-side on the one hand, verdant quiet meadows, with the river winding peacefully along, on the other, and the slopes of Moel Siabod, beautifully wooded low down and heather-clad above, where its

rocky cone thrusts heavenward, are the chief features of scenes that change and group themselves afresh times innumerable as we journey along. After crossing Ty-hyll bridge the valley widens for a space and then, as it narrows rapidly, a dull roar ascends from the chasm on our left. This is the voice of the Falls of the Swallow, the finest waterfall in Wales. A walk of a few yards through a gateway on our left brings us to the brink of the chasm and, whether the fall be full or not, a fine thrill is ours when we gaze at the rushing waters as they thunder down the gorge. In the great pool below us is supposed to lie the soul of Sir John Wynn, the shrewd and successful first baronet of Gwydir, near Llanrwst, there to be "punished, purged and purified from the deeds done in his days of nature." Poor fellow, his success would have been dearly bought were he in very truth to be imprisoned in such a boiling cauldron as this! Two miles of exquisite roadway, bordered by mossy walls and arched over by great trees, then bring us to hotels and civilization, the erstwhile "house of prayer in the wood," Bettws-y-coed.

Miners' Bridge and River Llugwy.

Bettws-y-coed

With Glyder Fach, Tryfaen and the Carnedds beyond

CHAPTER VI.

Strolls around Bettws-y-coed and Climbs on Snowdon.

IT would appear almost an impertinence to any visitor to Wales to attempt to point out to him the beauties of Bettws-y-coed. This little mountain village is the tourist's first aim. He has heard of it ever since he can remember anything. His youthful visits to the Royal Academy disclosed canvases of lovely river scenes, with names weird and meaningless, except that the majority of them were "near Bettws-y-coed." And when he first visited the spots themselves he greeted them as old friends. Pont-y-Pair, with its beautiful ivy-clad arch, and the rocky river-bed below; that lovely stretch of the Llugwy, with Moel Siabod watching above it; the Falls of Conway and the Swallow; the gorgeous Vale of Lledr and its bridge—all were known to him long before he came here. But what a joy to see the scenes in substance and to find that they far excel their presentments on canvas! For no artist, not even David Cox, who often worked here, can adequately picture the bowers of foliage, the long stretches of musical river and the rocky, fir-clad heights conjured up by the name of Bettws. In spite of its notoriety, however, the "Chapel in the Wood" is singularly unspoilt, and a visitor in the off-season would scarcely credit that it is the resort of thousands in August. The mile-long village, with its tree-bordered streets and the Conway and Llugwy murmuring near by, is innocent of band stands or Kursaals, and the nature lover can pass from end to end and out into the country around without hearing a jarring note. All credit to those whose conservatism has so well preserved its rusticity and charm!

We have seen something of the Llugwy, the Falls of the Swallow and the road over Ty-hyll Bridge to Capel Curig in other chapters. Let

us now wander along the parallel valley of Lledr as far as Pont-y-Pant, including in our stroll the Fairy Glen and Conway Falls. Passing down the village street, we soon come to Waterloo Bridge. After crossing it, Telford's main Holyhead road continues up the hill to the bleak uplands of Pentre Voelas and Cerrig-y-Druidion, with lovely views across Conway River to the Vale of Lledr and Moel Siabod. We take the lower river-side road after crossing the bridge, however, and after a mile of rich valley attain Beaver's Pool, the name of which, in common with Nant Ffrancon (the Vale of Beavers), points to the time when the beaver lived wild in North Wales. A few hundred yards further brings us to a signboard and other evidences of Fairy Glen, which, after disbursing some coppers at the cottage, we are allowed to visit. The cliffs on either side are too steep to allow of a path along the Glen, but we have a lovely peep through it; a delicious combination of river pools and impending waterworn rock, overgrown with ferns, dwarf oak and mountain ash—an ideal place for a hot, lazy summer's afternoon.

We then retrace our steps to the old roadway, which soon becomes a green cart-track running along the hill-side, and wander upwards for a mile or so. The views hereabouts are simply ravishing. Moel Siabod is the outstanding feature; it makes the Lliwedd peaks of Snowdon, the Glyders, and the rocky crest of Tryfaen, which stand up beyond it, appear quite unimportant. Vale of Lledr, too, looks its best from here; the delights of its rich woodland and stream are enhanced by comparison with the wild mountain slopes at its head. At our feet rushes the Conway, and shortly its famous falls come into sight. A huge outcrop of rock here divides the river into two streams; the water rushes down steeply inclined slabs on either side for fully fifty feet and unites below. Up the centre runs a salmon ladder, greatly disfiguring the falls in spite of the fact that its object is sport, and not commerce. A finer sight is the meeting of the waters of the Machno and Conway

Fairy Glen

On the Conway, near Bettws-y-coed

The Vale of Lledr

With Moel Siabod beyond

in the wild gorge above. Higher up still are the Falls of Machno and Pandy Mill, delightful spots which the old Welsh guide used to describe as "the grandest waterfall, the most surprising ruins and the most excellent sceneries in Wales!"

Beyond these a return path through the woods leads us pleasantly downward, with the Conway singing lustily out of the gorge on our right, until we come to a gate where, if we would expend twopence wisely, we can cross Jubilee Bridge to a huge rock in mid-stream—a lovely view-point for the gorge and wooded vistas above Fairy Glen. Returning through the toll-gate, we regain the path and presently cross a bridge over the Lledr, whence a rock, high up on the left, presents a striking likeness to the great Duke of Wellington, or, for that matter, to anybody else who was not "behind the door" when noses were distributed! We are now on the main road up the Vale of Lledr, with its famous river in sight far below us, fretting and fuming its way through such rocky gorges and wooded groves as render it well-nigh unique. Is there, indeed, a lovelier stretch of river than this in all Britain? I very much doubt it. The Dee above Llangollen, the Spean near Spean Bridge, the Duddon above Ulpha, the Derwent in Borrowdale or, nearer at hand, the Llugwy, all have stretches of extreme beauty to compare with it, but not one is better. It fights its foaming way down a valley of singular contrasts. Bare frowning cliffs plunge their bases into deep heather and bracken; sombre pine-woods rise directly above luscious lowland foliage; bare mountain sides merge into luxuriant meadows, and the scenes change and follow each other in a way that is perfectly amazing, even in this land of quick transitions.

Just below Pont-y-Pant, where the road drops to the river's level, it makes great commotion as it roars through a deep gorge; and, here, too, a quaint old bridge spans it. It is very probable that a bridge stood hereabouts in Roman times, for "Sarn Helen," ("the way of

the legion"), a Roman causeway leading over into the Llugwy Vale, almost touches the Lledr at this point. A little higher up the Vale is the village of Dolwyddelan and its ancient Welsh fortress—the birthplace of Llewelyn the Great, and the last stronghold in North Wales to defy Edward I.

In all directions the strolls around Bettws-y-coed are most beautiful. The moorland Llyn Elsi, and its background of Siabod, only a half-hour's walk above the village; the upland village of Capel Garmon, with its fine cromlech and wondrous views into Snowdonia; Llyn y Parc, and half-a-dozen other delectable lakelets a short distance northwards above Llanrwst and Trefriw: these are amongst some of the favourites. But space forbids longer dalliance 'midst these luxurious haunts. The delights of Snowdon await us, and, to be quite candid, I would gladly exchange a whole week of lowland joys for a couple of days amongst its crags and fastnesses.

. . . . . .

The ascent of Snowdon from Penygwryd, by way of Cwm Dyli, Llyn Llydaw, Glaslyn, and "the Zig-Zags"—the steep path below the summit—delightful as it is, is too familiar to call for detailed notice here. The tour of Snowdon's "Horseshoe"—the high-level scramble along Crib Goch, Carnedd Ugain and Snowdon, finishing over the crest of Lliwedd—provides the finest mountain walk in Wales. The sharp summit of Crib Goch, such a conspicuous object from the top of Llanberis Pass, can be attained without any great effort. From its summit the ridge stretches away westward, becoming very narrow in places. This narrow stretch plunges steeply on one side into Cwm Glas, and it has struck terror into the hearts of many excursionists. They have peered over into the depths and retreated by the way they came. More venturesome spirits have held on their way—literally—but it is an amusing sight to see grown men creeping along the ridge

The Crazy Pinnacle, Crib Goch

Crib Goch Pinnacles and Snowdon

The right-hand peak is Carnedd Ugain; Glaslyn is seen on the left below the pinnacles

on hands and knees in fear and trembling, and more amusing still when one considers that they are supposed to be enjoying themselves.

After about three hundred feet of this narrow ridge, we come to Crib Goch Pinnacles, a series of jagged and splintered crags much favoured by the rock-climbing fraternity. The finest of these is Crazy Pinnacle. Whether it is named after the people who climb it, or the somewhat friable nature of its rock, is uncertain, but it is certain that many of our finest mountaineers have imbibed their first love of the sport from its ascent. It is only about fifteen feet high from the neck where it joins the main ridge.

But beware of trying to make a too hasty ascent, and do not be tempted to record your feat in a public place. Bear in mind the entry in a certain hotel visitors' book—"So and so ascended the Pinnacle in 5½ minutes and found the rocks very easy"—and the subsequent entry by an indignant climber, "The above party *descended* the Pinnacle in 5½ *seconds* and found the rocks very hard!" The route up the outside of Crazy Pinnacle from Cwm Glas, as seen in the illustration, is a very different matter and is only for climbers of long experience.

Beyond the Pinnacles the ridge widens and it is a delightful walk, with grand views into the Cwms on either hand, over Carnedd Ugain, whence, if the signals be favourable, we may cross the railway line and safely attain the top of Snowdon. Its solitude has departed. A hotel and railway station crowd its summit, and hordes of excursionists foregather daily, drinking in the glorious view and imbibing other things even more moist than the prospect from Snowdon.

I wonder what Wordsworth would have written about these present-day gatherings. He ascended Snowdon by night from Beddgelert, starting in a "dripping mist," and emerging at the summit in bright moonlight. A scene of singular and rare beauty greeted him for,

as far as the eye could reach, the Cambrian mountains stood out like islands above a sea of mist;

> "The moon hung naked in a firmament
> Of azure without cloud, and at my feet
> Rested a silent sea of hoary mist.
> A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved
> All over this still ocean, and beyond,
> Far, far beyond, the solid vapours stretched,
> In headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,
> Into the main Atlantic, that appeared
> To dwindle, and give up his majesty,
> Usurped upon far as the eye could reach."

From the summit of Y Wyddfa we follow the Beddgelert track for a few yards and then strike downwards to the left, by way of some very steep and exposed "zig-zags" which bring us to the gap between Snowdon and Lliwedd. The path—the famous Watkin path—continues down the flank of Lliwedd into Nant Gwynant, but we follow the crest of the ridge ahead until we rise to the top of the grandest crag in Wales. Lliwedd plunges almost vertically downward for close upon a thousand feet into Cwm Dyli and, as we peer over the edge, the waters of Llyn Llydaw seem to lap its base. This is a veritable rock-climber's paradise; at such times as Easter and Whitsuntide their cheery voices and the clink of their ice-axes can be heard amongst the crags from dawn till dusk. Every conceivable route up the face has been climbed, dozens of them in all, and they are duly chronicled in a closely-written book of one hundred pages.

I recall many happy days spent among the fastnesses of Lliwedd. A certain day in 1897, when my brother and I, after a fearful struggle, emerged successful from the top of its terrific Slanting Gully, stands out like a landmark in my memory. A subsequent climb, also, up the Eastern Gully at the opposite end of the crags, I shall not soon forget.

It had been a drenching night, and when three of us set out in the morning we had no intention of serious climbing. However,

when we reached the foot of the crags nothing would satisfy my two youthful companions, hot-headed and eager for a climb, but an attempt on this formidable Eastern Gully. All my objections as to wet and cold rocks were over-ruled; if I refused to accompany them they would go alone! The upshot was that about two hours later found us three hundred feet up the precipice and in a very "tight corner." P——, who had been climbing first with the rope, had reached a recess high above our heads and could neither advance nor retrace his steps. He was wedged across the gully, his face blue with cold and his teeth chattering. The only thing for us to do was for us to climb around by another route, attain a safe position above him, and lower a rope to him, but this would need time.

"How long can you stay there?" I shouted.

"Not long, perhaps ten minutes," he returned, "It's very cold—hallo! look out!—stones!" And a piece about as big as a football bounded down from his recess, just scraped my knee, glanced the outside of the ledge on which I was standing, and whizzed down to the foot of the crags where it splintered into fragments. We cut short his apologies by demanding that he should take off his rope and throw the end down to us. After a hurried good-bye to him (a wet, woe-begone figure wedged in the gully above us) and injunctions not to move, we climbed away to the right up some easier rocks and thence back again at a higher level, until we were immediately above our stranded comrade.

We threw him a rope-end and very shortly afterwards received directions in a feeble voice from below us to "pull hard as he was too numbed to climb."

"Is your knot securely tied?"

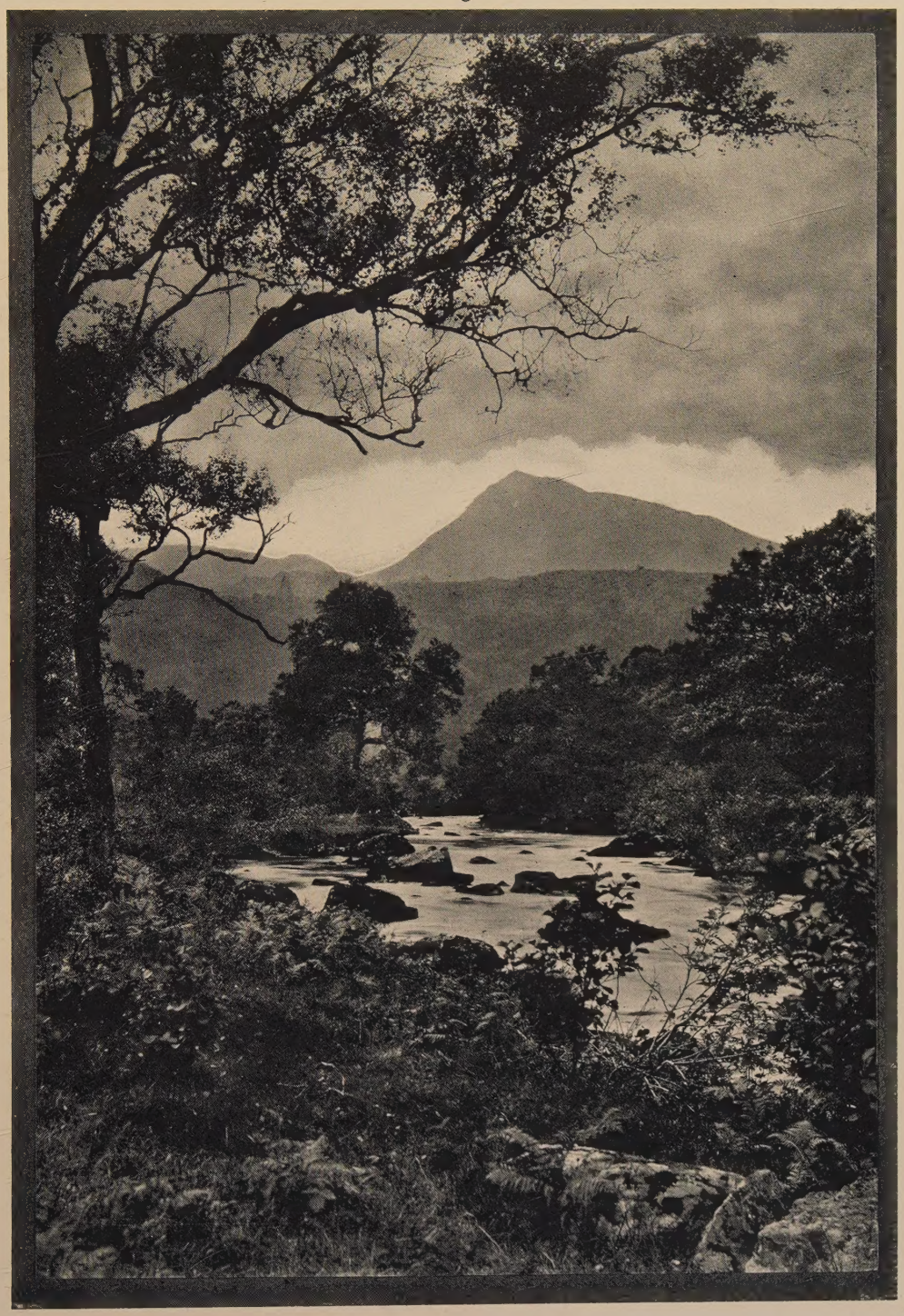
"Yes!"

"Come along then!" and we soon had our efforts rewarded by seeing a very blue face emerge over the edge, followed by a most painful caricature of the jaunty climber who had so light-heartedly undertaken to lead us up the gully some three hours earlier. Then followed congratulations and good resolves for the future. The climbing now became easier, and we were soon seated around the summit cairn disposing of a sodden, but well-earned lunch, while we

> "Looked from our peak to the limitless distance,
> Saw mountain and sea in the rain and the sun
> Tasted the intimate joy of existence
> Labour accomplished and victory won!"

Other memories of Lliwedd remain with me; memories of driving rain, dense mist and howling wind; of hot, cloudless June afternoons, when the cone of Snowdon and the ridge of Crib Goch shimmered across the Cwm in the heat-haze; of showery April days with their changing pageantry of sunshine and shadow, and of golden sunsets with afterglow that gladdened our downward tramp to Penygwryd.

But our space is up, and much remains to be said. Dozens of shapely mountains and lovely valleys must remain unvisited, even unmentioned, in such a brief work as this. But the same could doubtless be said of any book on this wonderful district. Its joys are inexhaustible. Fresh and unsuspected beauties break upon the vision at every recurring visit, and it is only the oldest and most intimate *habitué* who realizes how incomplete his knowledge of it really is. But those who have wandered even as far in Wales as the places I have mentioned will have stored up a treasury of golden memories which all the ills of life and time can never efface.



Moel Siabod

From the River Llugwy

KQ-816-424